

## Democrats divided: Progressives, centrists say trust is gone

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — In their fight over trillions of dollars, their paramount policy goals and perhaps their political fate, this isn't helping: Democratic progressives and centrists say they don't trust each other. They're tossing around words like "stupid" and "insanity" and they're drawing lines in the sand. Congressional majorities of both parties have rich histories of infighting when it comes to enacting their priorities, even when they control the White House and both chambers of Congress. Democrats had to overcome stark internal divisions in 2010 to enact President Barack Obama's health care law. The GOP fell short

in 2017 when it failed to repeal that statute, President Donald Trump's top goal. This time, Democrats' internal battling over a 10-year, \$3.5 trillion package of social and environmental initiatives comes with virtually no margin for error and lots at stake. They'll need every Democratic vote in the 50-50 Senate and all but three in the House to succeed. Facing that arithmetic, public declarations of distrust for each other do little to promote the healing they'll need to avoid sending the legislative essence of Joe Biden's presidency down in flames, with potential long-term consequences.

Continued on next page



In this Sept. 21, 2021, file photo Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., joined at left by Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., right, speaks about the Keeping Renters Safe Act of 2021, at the Capitol in Washington.

Associated Press

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In this March 1, 2021, file photo Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., right, with Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., at left, speaks during a news conference on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press

#### Continued from Front

"It's not healthy for the Democrats to be issuing ultimatums about tactics" against each other, said Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt. "It's politically, existentially important to us to be successful. We fail, we're doomed."

Those ultimatums were coming to a head Thursday, the day House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has said her chamber would vote on another measure pivotal to Biden's domestic vision — a \$1 trillion package of highway, high-speed internet and other infrastructure improvements. She's suggested, though, that the showdown vote might be delayed.

While Democrats overwhelmingly want both bills to pass and much of what is said should be consid-

ered posturing, the push is at a delicate moment.

In return for moderates' support for an earlier budget measure, Pelosi began debate this week on the infrastructure bill, which tops their wish list.

But progressives dominating the House are promising to derail it by voting no because they lack confidence that the centrists will back the separate \$3.5 trillion legislation, which progressives treasure.

Centrists consider the larger bill too expensive and oppose some of its spending increases and tax boosts on the wealthy and corporations to help pay for it. Reflecting the need for a deal between the two factions, that bill's ultimate size is certain to shrink.

Progressives want Democratic leaders to stand by

earlier statements that both bills would move through Congress together. That was to be a kind of mutually assured destruction moment, letting each of the party's wings hold the other's priority hostage until both could pass.

Right now, there's no compromise version of the larger bill in sight, so that won't work. With two centrist Democratic senators — West Virginia's Joe Manchin and Arizona's Kyrsten Sinema — the major obstacles to such a deal, the sniping is pitting House and Senate Democrats against each other as well.

"We are not blindly trusting that these bills are going to get done in the Senate, without actually having that be guaranteed," said Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., a leader of House progres-

sives. The guarantee she and other progressives want is a Senate-passed, compromise \$3.5 trillion measure that progressives support and can pass the House.

"My father told me when I was growing up, there's a fine line between being a good guy" and a "fool," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass. "I don't want to be rolled." He said House progressives want "an assurance" that the Senate will send a compromise bill to the House.

Yet instead of waiting for that accord to be struck, House leaders were honoring "some stupid, arbitrary deadline" that moderates demanded to debate and vote on the infrastructure bill this week, complained Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., who heads the nearly 100-member Congressional Progressive Caucus. As for moderates, Rep. Stephanie Murphy, D-Fla., told reporters Wednesday that she wanted Biden, party leaders and outside allies like labor unions to lobby House Democrats to back the infrastructure

measure.

"If the vote were to fail tomorrow or be delayed, there would be a significant breach in trust that would slow the momentum in moving forward in delivering the Biden agenda," said Murphy, leader of the centrist House Blue Dog Coalition.

Later Wednesday, Manchin, perhaps the centrist whom party progressives most resent, piqued them further with his latest salvo against the \$3.5 trillion package. Spending that much at a time of inflation and a ballooning national debt is "the definition of fiscal insanity," Manchin said. "I assume he's saying that the president is insane, because this is the president's agenda," Jayapal said.

None of this is a surprise to John Lawrence. He was Pelosi's chief of staff when Obama's health care overhaul moved through Congress. That measure was enacted over solid Republican opposition, when Democrats had much larger majorities than today. But first, Democrats in the House and Senate spent months fighting over issues like whether to include government-run "public option" health coverage, which ended up being dropped. Distrust between the two chambers ran "very, very deep," Lawrence recalled in an interview. To address that, then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., privately presented a letter to nervous House Democrats that he said committed Democratic senators to supporting provisions in a House-passed bill that embodied parts of the overhaul. As was true a decade ago, letting Democrats' internal disputes sink Biden's agenda risks damage in next year's congressional elections by alienating voters, Lawrence said.

"It either shows Democrats can be trusted to govern" or not, he said of how the party will handle the current fight.

"It's like the gunfight at the OK Corral," Lawrence said. "Everybody has their guns pointed at each other. You either pull the trigger or go back into the saloon and try to work this thing out." □





# Military suicides rise 15% as senior leaders call for action

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR** and **ROBERT BURNS**

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The number of U.S. military suicides jumped by 15% last year, fueled by significant increases in the Army and Marine Corps that senior leaders called troubling. They urged more effort to reverse the trend.

According to data released Thursday, there were 580 suicides last year compared with 504 the prior year. Of those, the number of suicides by Army National Guard troops jumped by about 35%, from 76 in 2019 to 103 last year, and the active duty Army saw a nearly 20% rise.

"The findings are troubling," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said. "Suicide rates among our service members and military families are still too high, and the trends are not going in the right direction."

Suicide has long been a problem in the U.S. military. While the causes of suicide



In this May 31, 2021 file photo, flags and tributes mark the Memorial Day holiday at Fort Logan National Cemetery in southeast Denver.

are complex and not fully understood, military leaders have previously said they believed the COVID-19 pandemic was adding stress to an already

strained force. Troops last year were called to help provide testing and later vaccines while struggling with the virus themselves and among relatives and

friends. They also dealt with continued war-zone deployments, national disasters and often violent civil unrest.

Behavioral research has linked military suicides to a range of personal issues, including financial and marital stress.

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby acknowledged the Defense Department cannot fully explain the increases in suicides in recent years.

"One of the things that is bedeviling about suicide is that it's often very hard to connect dots in causality — what leads somebody to make that decision," Kirby

said. "It's difficult to denote specific causality with suicide on an individual basis, let alone on an institutional basis. And I think that's why it's so difficult for us to speak to it with any specificity, except to say we take this very, very seriously."

Military leaders for a number of years have sought to reduce the stigma associated with seeking mental health assistance.

That message was conveyed in a remarkable public statement last year by Gen. John Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He said he sought help while heading U.S. Strategic Command from 2016 to 2019. He didn't reveal details but said he saw a psychiatrist — a rare public admission by a senior officer.

Army leaders on Thursday called suicide a significant challenge for the service, noting that the trend has been increasing for the last five years.

"While there is no clear understanding of what is causing the increase in suicides, we realize we have to do better in preventing suicide and ensure resources are available and readily accessible," said Army Secretary Christine Wormuth and Gen. James C. McConville, Army chief of staff, in a statement.

The total number of Navy suicides dipped from 81 to 79, and the Air Force stayed the same, at 109. □

Associated Press

## Gunmaker Smith & Wesson moving headquarters to Tennessee

By **JONATHAN MATTISE**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)** — Gun manufacturer Smith & Wesson plans to relocate its headquarters from Massachusetts to gun-friendlier Tennessee in a \$125 million investment expected to create 750 jobs, officials announced Thursday.

The gunmaker founded in 1852 is currently centered in Springfield, Massachusetts, a state where company officials say legislative proposals would prohibit them from manufacturing certain weapons.

A proposal in the Democrat-led state Legislature would extend the state's ban on the sale and possession of assault weapons or large-capacity magazines to also outlaw manufacturing them in Massachusetts, unless it's for the military or law enforcement.

"While we are hopeful that this arbitrary and dam-



In this Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2014 file photo, trade show attendees examine handguns and rifles at the Smith & Wesson display booth at the Shooting Hunting and Outdoor Trade Show, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

aging legislation will be defeated in this session, these products made up over 60% of our revenue last year, and the unfortunate likelihood that such restrictions would be raised again led to a review of the best path forward for Smith & Wesson," Mark Smith, Smith & Wesson CEO, said in a news release.

Tennessee's Department of Economic and Community Development says Smith & Wesson Brands, Inc. will move its headquarters, distribution, assembly and plastic injection molding operations to Maryville, 18 miles (29 kilometers) south of Knoxville. Groundbreaking is planned before the end of the year. □



### Results of the Government of Aruba Treasury Bills issue – Afl. 45,000,000.00 September 30, 2021 – December 30, 2021

Issuance pursuant to the State Ordinance on Treasury Paper (AB 1987 no. 3) and the State Decree no. 1 of September 17, 2021.

The Centrale Bank van Aruba hereby informs that the Treasury Bills issue of September 30, 2021 for the amount of Afl. 45,000,000.00 with a maturity of three (3) months has been fully subscribed. The average discount yield of the Treasury Bills issue of September 30, 2021 is 1.39 percent.

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# S. Carolina court upholds mask ban; trumped by federal ruling

By JEFFREY COLLINS

Associated Press

**COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP)** — Two days after a federal judge decided that South Carolina's ban on school mask requirements discriminates against medically fragile students, the state Supreme Court disagreed, in a ruling that won't change the week's events.

Federal law trumps state law, so the U.S. District Court ruling allowing school districts to require masks is the binding one. Within an hour, South Carolina education officials sent out a memo telling districts that Thursday's state decision changed nothing.

The South Carolina Supreme Court said districts can require masks without violating the state rule if they can find a way to avoid spending state money enforcing the wearing of face coverings.

The court also upheld as legal a different provision in the state budget, which limits school districts to having 5% of their students learning virtually all year, reducing state funding by half for each student above that mark.

Lawyers for Richland School District 2 argued



**Two Camden Elementary School students in masks listen as South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster talks about steps the school is taking to fight COVID-19, Wednesday, Sept. 15, 2021, in Camden, S.C.**

Associated Press

the Legislature violated state law that requires legislation to only be about one topic. But the justices in their unanimous ruling said since the rules included clauses about spending state money, it was legal. Where the two courts disagreed was on whether the state not allowing districts to make their own mask rules discriminates and pre-

vents some students from getting the public education they have a right to get under the law.

U.S. District Judge Mary Geiger Lewis said it wasn't a close call to side with the parents of disabled children who sued the state with the help of The American Civil Liberties Union. Her preliminary injunction, issued Tuesday, said any bur-

den from having to wear a mask is greatly outweighed by the need to ensure that medically fragile students feel safe enough to go to school.

"It is noncontroversial that children need to go to school. And, they are entitled to any reasonable accommodation that allows them to do so. No one can reasonably argue that it is

an undue burden to wear a mask to accommodate a child with disabilities," Lewis wrote.

Gov. Henry McMaster and state Attorney General Alan Wilson appealed the temporary restraining order Thursday, asking higher court judges to restore the ban to avoid changing mask policies across the state now that students are back at school.

The South Carolina Supreme Court heard arguments in the state case on Aug. 31, a week after the federal lawsuit was filed, and took a month to issue their unsigned ruling. It says any student can choose on their own to wear a mask, because the state rule treats all students equally.

"In this case, there is no evidence that any students are receiving disparate treatment. Indeed, there cannot be any argument of disparate treatment, as the provisos apply equally to all students and all public K-12 schools," the justices wrote.

The Richland County district was the first in the state to require masks after the federal ruling Tuesday. Several others required masks before the ruling. □

# After 15 years in prison, man cleared in deaths of 5 kids



**Juwan Deering gets a hug outside the courthouse in Pontiac, Michigan, on Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021, after murder charges were dropped in a fire that killed five children in suburban Detroit in 2000.**

Associated Press

By ED WHITE

Associated Press

**PONTIAC, Mich. (AP)** — Murder charges were dismissed Thursday against a

man who spent 15 years in prison for the fire-related deaths of five children in suburban Detroit, the climax of an investigation

that found misconduct by police and prosecutors.

Juwan Deering will not face a second trial, Oakland County prosecutor Karen McDonald said. A judge granted her request to close the case a week after Deering's convictions and life sentences were thrown out at her urging. Wearing a three-piece suit, Deering, 50, walked into court shackled at the waist but departed as a free man with no restraints.

"It's been a hard uphill battle. ... The sun couldn't shine on not a brighter day. This is the brightest for me," Deering said moments later as family members clung to him on a cloudless morning and other Detroit-area men exonerated of crimes stood nearby.

Deering praised the new

prosecutor for her "exceptional" work.

"I told her it took a lot of strength to step up against the status quo," he said.

McDonald, a former judge who was elected in 2020, took a fresh look at Deering's case at the request of the University of Michigan law school's Innocence Clinic.

Favorable evidence, including statements by a fire survivor, was not shared with his defense lawyer before the 2006 trial, and jurors didn't know that jail informants were given significant benefits for their testimony against Deering, McDonald said.

Deering has insisted he was innocent in a fire that killed children in his neighborhood in Royal Oak Township in 2000. No one could

identify him as being at the house. Authorities at the time said the fire was revenge for unpaid drug debts.

The prosecutor said a dozen law enforcement professionals last week unanimously determined there was insufficient evidence to tie Deering to the fire. The investigation between 2000 and 2006 was "totally compromised by misconduct," McDonald said.

"There is only one ethical and constitutional remedy," she said in dropping the case.

Law students earlier had been trying to get a new trial for Deering, arguing that the fire analysis was based on "junk science." Those requests were unsuccessful in Michigan's appellate courts. □



# Leaders of 4 Dutch parties open to renewing coalition

By MIKE CORDER

Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — Leaders of the four parties that made up the last coalition government in the Netherlands agreed Thursday — more than six months after a general election — to join forces again for another four-year term, leading negotiators said.

The decision moves the drawn-out process of forming a new governing coalition into a new phase that involves sketching out a brief policy blueprint for the next four years and selecting ministers. Only then can a new Dutch government be sworn in by King Willem-Alexander.

Caretaker Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who is expected to lead what would be his fourth government, insisted the next administration would not be more of the same even though the coalition consists of the same four parties: Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, the centrist D66, the Christian Democrats and the Christian Union.

"There's a huge amount of work to be done, and I think these parties will have to draw up a program to



In this Friday, April 2, 2021 file photo, Sigrid Kaag, leader of the centrist D66 party that finished second in elections last month gestures during a debate in parliament in The Hague, Netherlands. Associated Press

reflect that," Rutte said. "It will be a new start, a new culture, with a new program." It was not immediately clear how long it would take to complete the next round of talks.

The last government quit in January to take political responsibility for a scandal in which the country's tax authorities wrongly labeled as fraudsters many families who were claiming child welfare benefits.

It was the latest scandal to hit Rutte's third Cabinet amid an increasingly tense

relationship with lawmakers and calls for a new culture of openness from the government.

Johan Remkes, the official who led coalition talks in recent weeks, said in his final report that five opposition parties also should be invited to play a role in upcoming negotiations about a brief policy blueprint.

After months of on-off talks, the process of forming a workable coalition finally progressed after D66 leader Sigrid Kaag said Thursday she was prepared to begin

negotiations to re-form the four-party Cabinet whose resignation led to a March 17 election.

Kaag long ruled out joining a coalition with the Christian Union party due to ideological differences but removed the condition in recent days in an attempt to breathe new life into the ailing talks.

She said she wants an ambitious policy blueprint for the next government.

"This means that the Netherlands will become a climate frontrunner in Europe,

that we will make the largest structural investment in education ever and that the Netherlands will take a leading role at the European Union," Kaag said.

She said her party wants the new coalition to be "more progressive, more generous, more open and more humane."

But she sounded a note of caution about the next phase of talks.

"Will it work? I do not know," said Kaag, who resigned as caretaker foreign minister two weeks ago over the chaotic Dutch evacuations from Afghanistan after the Taliban swept to power.

Jesse Klaver, leader of the Green Left opposition party, said the coalition had failed during its last term to tackle crises such as chronic housing shortages, climate change and inequality.

"Why would that be different if the coalition continues?" Klaver tweeted. "What the Netherlands needs is change. This is more of the same."

Populist anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders slammed Kaag's decision, saying it was aimed at preventing her party from being punished by voters in the next elections. □

# U.S., Russia to push ahead on arms control, strategic talks

By JAMEY KEATEN and MATTHEW LEE

Associated Press

GENEVA (AP) — The United States and Russia agreed Thursday to press ahead with arms control and related strategic security talks despite significant differences between the two sides.

In high-level discussions in Geneva, senior U.S. and Russian diplomats signed off on setting up two working groups to pursue potential accords related to nuclear weapons and other global threats: the Working Group on Principles and Objectives for Future Arms Control and the Working Group on Capabilities and Actions with Strategic Effects.

A senior U.S. official de-

scribed the second meeting of the U.S.-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue since President Joe Biden took office as having been "intensive and substantive" and "detailed and dynamic" but offered no specifics. A joint statement from the two sides said the talks were part of an "integrated, deliberate, and robust process."

Beyond those platitudes, however, there were no tangible developments from Thursday's meeting other than an agreement to hold additional high-level discussions after the working groups meet. And, no dates were announced for the working group meetings.

The two sides were represented by U.S. Deputy Sec-

retary of State Wendy Sherman and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov.

They are split by a variety of issues ranging from the nuclear to the cyber realms with the Americans still fuming over what they say has been Russian interference in U.S. and European elections, computer hacking, Moscow's role in unrest in Ukraine and Georgia, and the poisoning of Russian dissidents.

The U.S. official said, though, that Thursday's talks focused on the larger picture, particularly arms control since the Trump administration withdrew from two treaties with Russia and had been prepared to allow a third New START to lapse before Biden took



In this Aug. 18, 2021 file photo, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman speaks at the State Department in Washington. Associated Press

office and decided to extend it.

A key hurdle in the talks has been Russia's demand that the U.S. stop resisting limits on its missile defenses, which the Russians view as a long-term threat and the

Americans see as a deterrent to war. At the same time, the U.S. has since the Trump administration been demanding that China be included in any future arms control agreements. China has rejected the calls. □



# Myanmar official defends 4-month detention of U.S. reporter

**BANGKOK (AP)** — Myanmar's military-installed government on Thursday defended its detention of an American journalist it has now held for four months, without offering any details of the crimes it alleges.

Military spokesman Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun did not elaborate in his response at a news conference to a question about Danny Fenster, who is awaiting trial on a charge of incitement, also called sedition. Fenster, 37, is managing editor of the Yangon-based online news and business magazine Frontier Myanmar.

The charge, used frequently against dissidents and journalists, criminalizes "any attempt to cause fear, spread false news, or agitate directly or indirectly a criminal offense against a government employee." It is punishable by up to three years in prison.

Asked about the reason for the arrest, Zaw Min Tun responded: "As for journalists, if they do only journalist's work, there is no reason to arrest them. Danny Fenster did more than just what a journalist does." He said he could not say more, other



In this 2018, photo, U.S. journalist Danny Fenster works out of his van that he made into a home/office in Detroit.

Associated Press

than that Fenster was kept detained because he has been charged.

Fenster's lawyer and colleagues have denied any wrongdoing on his part.

Fenster was among about 100 journalists detained since the Feb. 1 military takeover ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. More than half have since been released, but free speech remains

under tight restrictions, with independent media forced to operate underground or from outside the country. Resistance to military rule was initially met with widespread peaceful street protests, but security forces used deadly force against demonstrators — killing more than 1,100 — and now face violent counterattacks.

Zaw Min Tun denied Fen-

ster's statement in mid-July that he believed he had contracted COVID-19 and was not given medicine he had requested. The authorities at Yangon's Insein Prison also have denied he is infected. He also told his lawyer on Sept. 20 that he had not received a COVID-19 vaccination.

"Danny Fenster is in good health," said Zaw Min Tun. "The COVID-19 vaccine is

being given to all those in prisons. It is up to him to decide whether or not to get vaccinated."

Fenster's lawyer Than Zaw Aung said Fenster seemed demoralized when he last spoke with him in a video conference during a Sept. 20 court hearing.

"His hair grew longer. He seemed disappointed and he told me in a frustrated tone that 'I have nothing to say,'" the lawyer said. "I asked him if he had been vaccinated by the prison authorities, and he said no. His words showed that he is not feeling well. He didn't request anything."

Fenster was detained at Yangon International Airport on May 24 as he was trying to board a flight to the Detroit area in the United States to see his family, who are now leading a campaign for his release. The U.S. government and international media organizations backed their call for the release of Fenster and other journalists.

Than Zaw Aung said in July that his client was charged in connection with his previous job as a reporter and copy editor for the online news site Myanmar Now. □

# China, U.S. in talks on military relations amid strained ties



In this May 28, 2020, file photo, military delegates arrive for the closing session of China's National People's Congress (NPC) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Associated Press

**BEIJING (AP)** — Defense officials from China and the U.S. have held two days of talks in a small sign of progress amid a continuing sharp downturn in relations. The secure video conference held Tuesday and

Wednesday was led by Maj. Gen. Huang Xueping, deputy director of the People's Liberation Army's Office for International Military Cooperation, and U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for China Mi-

chael Chase. Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian on Thursday said the sides "exchanged in-depth views on relations between the two countries and the two militaries and issues of common concern."

However, he blamed "continuous provocation and containment" of China by the U.S. for the "considerable difficulties and challenges" between the two militaries.

"China's sovereignty, dignity and core interests brook no violations," Wu said at a monthly briefing. "Regarding the relationship between the two armed forces, we welcome communication, welcome cooperation, face differences and oppose coercion."

In a statement issued in

Washington, Department of Defense spokesperson Lt. Col. Martin Meiners said the meeting was "an important component of the Biden-Harris administration's ongoing effort to responsibly manage the competition between the U.S. and the PRC by maintaining open lines of communication with the PRC."

During the talks, he said the two sides held "a frank, in-depth, and open discussion on a range of issues."

"Both sides reaffirmed consensus to keep communication channels open. The U.S. side also made clear our commitment to uphold shared principles with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region," he said. Relations between China and the U.S. are facing the worst strain in decades over

trade, technology, human rights and Chinese military activities in the South China Sea, where Beijing has built airstrips and other infrastructure atop man-made islands.

Military-to-military ties have been characterized by deep mistrust, with the U.S. accusing China of a lack of transparency as it massively upgrades the capabilities of the PLA, the military wing of the ruling Communist Party. China has been angered by the Navy sending ships to sail close to islands it controls in what Washington calls freedom of navigation operations, along with U.S. support for Taiwan. President Joe Biden has maintained a tough line on China, but has sought better communication with Beijing. □



# Ethiopia expels U.N. officials amid Tigray blockade pressure

By CARA ANNA

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) —

Ethiopia said Thursday it is kicking out seven United Nations officials whom it accused of "meddling" in the country's internal affairs, as pressure grows on the Ethiopian government over its deadly blockade of the Tigray region.

The expulsions are the government's most dramatic move yet to restrict humanitarian access to the region of 6 million people after nearly a year of war. The U.N. has become increasingly outspoken as the flow of medical supplies, food and fuel has been brought to a near-halt.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was "shocked" by the announcement and expressed "full confidence" in U.N. staff, saying they are guided by impartiality and neutrality. In a statement, Guterres said the U.N. is engaging with Ethiopia's government "in the expectation that the concerned U.N. staff will be allowed to continue their important work."

Ethiopia's government has accused humanitarian workers of supporting the Tigray forces who have been fighting its soldiers and allied forces since November. Aid workers have denied it. Thousands of people have died in the conflict marked by gang rapes, mass expulsions and the destruction of health centers, with witnesses often blaming Ethiopian soldiers and those of neighboring Eritrea.

The U.N.'s humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths, this week told The Associated Press that the crisis in Ethiopia is a "stain on our conscience" as children and others starve to death in Tigray under what the U.N. calls a de facto government blockade. Just 10% of needed humanitarian supplies have been reaching Tigray in recent weeks, he said.

The remarks represented one of the most sharply worded criticisms so far of the world's worst hunger crisis in a decade. Memories of the 1980s famine



In this Saturday, Sept. 25, 2021 file photo, Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Demeke Mekonnen Hassen addresses the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters.

Associated Press

in Ethiopia, which killed around 1 million people and produced images that shocked the world, are vivid in his mind, Griffiths said, "and we fervently hope (this) is not happening at present."

The AP, citing witness accounts and internal documents, last week reported the first starvation deaths since Ethiopia's government imposed the blockade in June in an attempt to keep support from reaching Tigray forces.

A statement from Ethiopia's foreign ministry said the seven U.N. officials must leave the country within 72 hours. Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman Dina Mufti didn't immediately respond to a request for details of their alleged interference.

The people expelled include five with the U.N. humanitarian agency, including deputy coordinator Grant Leaity, one from the U.N. human rights office and the one UNICEF representative in the country, Adele Khodr. A spokesperson for the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and some of the individuals expelled didn't immediately comment.

Findings from a joint investigation into the war by the U.N. human rights office and the government-created Ethiopian Human Rights

Commission — a rare setup that has drawn concern

and criticism — are scheduled for release on Nov. 1. It wasn't immediately clear if the probe will be affected by the expulsion of a U.N. member of the joint team, Sonny Onyegbula.

Earlier, Ethiopia's government suspended the operations of two major international aid groups — Doctors Without Borders and the Norwegian Refugee Committee — accusing them of spreading "misinformation" about the war.

The government is so wary that humanitarian workers boarding rare flights to Tigray have been told they couldn't bring such items as can openers, multivitamins and medicine, even personal ones, as well as the means to document the crisis, including hard drives and flash drives. □



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## Soon home COVID-19 test will become available in Aruba

**ORANJESTAD – Within a few weeks the pharmacies in Aruba will sell Coronavirus self-tests that you can carry out yourself at home.**

Recently the Department of Public Health (DVG) and the Inspectorate of Public Health reached a consensus regarding the requirements the self-test must comply with for its use in Aruba. After outlining the criteria, now the process continues with the import of these tests by the pharmacies (through IVA). The DVG foresees that in mid-October 2021, these tests will be on the market in Aruba.

The factors that played a role in the decision to introduce the self-tests are:

- Recent studies indicate that some of these tests show an acceptable sensitivity grade and specificity in different groups (sub-population);
- We are entering a different phase of the pandemic. Bit by bit, we have to minimize interference in our daily lives and society, including physical education and the commercial sector. The self-test is a tool that can help to bring some perspective in this matter;
- The introduction of the self-test will not affect the primary strategy of the DVG to test suspicious cases. It is an addition and not a substitute of the current policy of the DVG;
- Currently, persons without symptoms (that will not be traveling), can not easily get a COVID test. To make the test more accessible, soon persons without symptoms that want to take a

COVID test can pay to take the test at an accredited lab or buy a self-test at a pharmacy in Aruba;

- At this moment, Aruba can confirm/verify the positive results of self-tests through a PCR test.
- The government notices a demand for self-tests primarily by the private, hotel, and commercial sectors.

The community needs to be aware that the result of a self-test is not an official diagnosis.

For example, if the person's self-test is positive, the person must take a PCR test at an accredited lab to verify the result. Without the PCR test, the DVG will not contact the person for contact tracing, and SVb will not cover the isolation expenses. If the self-test result is negative, one must always consider that it can be a false negative since the person took the test too early or did not adequately take the test.

The introduction of the self-test is the framework of screening, where citizens can test themselves and stop the spread of the COVID-19. The goal of the self-test is to detect more COVID-19 infections among citizens with light or without symptoms and for who a PCR-test is limited. If you have symptoms, please visit the web page <https://covid19test.healthapp.aw> and ask for a code to make an appointment for a COVID-19 test or contact your home physician to take a PCT test at an accredited lab.

In closing, it is essential to mention that the introduction of the self-test is not without risks. However, combined with the correct information and responsibility of our

citizens, it can help to give an overview of the COVID-19 cases among our population. The self-tests also contribute to a reduction in COVID-19 cases, if the persons testing positive with a self-test follow the required process. □

### Mega Win \$100,000 Cash Giveaway 2021 The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba launches its amazing campaign for 2021: \$100,000 in cash prizes



**PALM BEACH —The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba has just launched its campaign for 2021: Mega Win \$100,000 Cash Giveaway, where they will be giving away \$100,000 in cash prizes. This campaign starts October 1st with the grand finally on December 30th.**

- Five (5) finalists out of the big raffle box on November 26th
- Five (5) finalists out of the big raffle box on December 30th
- Five (5) finalists through the Top Player Points Race on December 30th

Starting October 1st all members of The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba can participate in this amazing campaign. To sign up as a new member of The Casino VIP Club is very easy: just bring a valid ID to The Casino VIP Desk, membership is free of charge. For every 80 points on Slot Machines and every \$40 in Theoretical Win on table games, you will receive one raffle ticket.

You can also participate by dining at Casa Nonna New York and BLT Steak. With every dinner purchase at these restaurants, you will receive a voucher. Simply present the restaurant voucher together with the dinner receipt at The Casino VIP Desk on the same night to redeem your raffle ticket.

There will be Twenty (20) finalists that will be selected on the following dates:

- Five (5) finalists out of the big raffle box on October 29th

The Grand Finale will take place on December 30th where twenty (20) finalists will participate to win \$100,000 in cash prizes. The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba invites you to visit the casino and sign-up as a new member of the VIP Club if you are not a member yet, to participate in this amazing campaign. The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba is also re-launching its Tier Program called Elevate, which offers exclusive benefits on the island. The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba is known to provide high quality personalized service, different table games, a great selection of the latest slot machines and now live entertainment every Friday and Saturday.

For more information how to participate for the \$100,000 Cash Giveaway, visit us at The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba VIP Desk or call us at 527-2276/ 527-2277 and we will be delighted to assist you. □

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# CINEARUBA presents Playa Film Festival

**ORANJESTAD —** A 3-day film festival with focus on the exchange of experiences and the sharing of knowledge and ideas. A place where the makers and art professionals come together with visitors in a selection of master classes, seminars, workshops, and networking events. The festival will contribute to the development, innovation, and expertise in the sector.

The organization is well known for its excellence in carrying out projects such as the award winning feature film 'Abo So', the multidisciplinary educational project 'Tribi Soña' and the cultural awareness project 'Biba Cultura'. CINEARUBA's films have showcase Aruba to the world. Fundacion CINEARUBA, formerly AVI-Audiovisual Institute of Aruba, is an independent not-for-profit organization established in 2010 by Aruban filmmaker Juan Francisco Pardo.

CINEARUBA started as an educational organization, devoted to developing an active audiovisual culture in Aruba through educational programs (Learn), practical projects (Make/Do) and screening. In 2015 CINEARUBA expanded its goals and services to benefit the educational, creative, cultural, and social sector.

**Friday, Oct. 1st, 8:00 PM OPENING FILM**

Neighbours, Switzerland Directed by Mano Khalil, 120 minutes, General  
With a fine sense of humor and satire, the film tells of a childhood, which, between dictatorship and dark drama, also has its light moments. How much friendship, love and solidarity are possible in times of repression and despotism?  
At 10:00 PM: Music: The Soundtrack Session by DJ Adriano Nanof, 120 minutes, Adults.  
4:00 PM

**Schedule Saturday October 2nd, 2021**

4:00PM	Films & Talks: 48 hour Film project	Black Box	45 minutes, General
5:00 PM	Screening: Kids Shorts & Animations	Black Box	45 minutes, General
6:00 PM	Kids Workshop: Lego Stop Motion	Room 1	45 minutes, All-Ages
6:00 PM	Screening: The Golf Ball – USA	Black Box	90 minutes, 16+
7:00 PM	Workshop: Movie Maquette	Room 1	45 minutes, All-Ages
8:00 PM	Seminar: Film Acting	Black Box	90 minutes, General
8:00 PM	Screening: Kingdom of Shorts Part 1	Outdoor Theater	103 minutes, PG
10:00PM	Music: Soundtrack Session +Networking	Outdoor Theater	120 minutes, Adults

**Sunday October 3rd, 2021**

4:00 PM	Screening International Sports	Black Box	95 minutes, 16+
6:00 PM	Masterclass: Story Development	Room 1	45 minutes, All-Ages
6:00 PM	Kids Workshop: Cartoon Voice Over	Black Box	45 minutes, All-Ages
7:00 PM	Talks: Home Made	Room 1	45 minutes, All-Ages
7:00 PM	Masterclass: Sound Good	Black Box	45 minutes, All-Ages
8:00 PM	Workshop: Production Ready	Black Box	90 minutes, All-Ages
8:00 PM	Screening: Kingdom of Shorts Part 2	Outdoor Theater	105 minutes, PG
10:00 PM	Music: Soundtrack Session +Networking	Outdoor Theater	120 minutes, Adults

The Playa film Festival will take place from October 1st to October 3rd, 2021 at Atelier's 89 Ateliers '89 Punto di Beyas Arte Aruba Foundation, located at Dominicanenstraat 34 in Oranjestad. For more information go to [cinearuba.com](http://cinearuba.com) or call +297 560 4804. □

## Mr. Price honored for his loyalty



**PALM BEACH —** Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority honored the Distinguished Visitors of Aruba as a token of appreciation for visiting the island for more than years and more consecutive years.

The honoree was:  
**Mr. John Price**, resident of Connecticut USA.  
Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with the members of Divi Phoenix Aruba bestowed the certificate to the honoree together

with some presents and thanked him for choosing Aruba as their vacation destination and as their home away from home for so many years on behalf of the Government of Aruba.

Price stated that the reason for coming back to Aruba are:  
The warm inviting sun  
The gracious treatment from everyone  
The Sea & Climate  
My wife took me there, first out of country visit □



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## Aruba Living Today, real estate mediation: We believe in building a connection and constructing a future

**NOORD** — "My goal was to do real estate in a different way when I established this company June 1st 2009. Not from the perspective of only selling, but to look for the perfect match between dream house and client. My philosophy is: it will only work when all involved are happy and connected by that personal touch," says Randolph Arends, owner of Aruba Living Today. Together with his business partner Berend Prenger and a dedicated team they practice what they preach: mediation in Real Estate with a high service level. "I am proud to state that so far all of my clients stayed with us. I am not selling a fairytale, in ten years of course there were challenges too but it is about how you handle those. It's like with family, you stick together with ups and downs. But the love is there."

Services offered by Aruba Living Today are House and Land Sales, Rentals, Investments, Property Management, Vacation Rental, Mortgages, Insurances, Maintenance, Assist in Arrangements for Notary and Utilities, Guiding Bureaucracy Process and Assisting in Import of Furniture. Berend is also a certified Appraisal within the Dutch Kingdom meaning he does your appraisal report that is accepted by all banks and he delivers within three days. "This definitely speeds up the process of buying," he says. This different approach of real estate is what sets Aruba Living Today apart and is also the reason why Randolph calls himself a property mediator instead of a real estate broker. "The personal touch is essential to me. I am stepping aside of the image that real estate brokers are only in for the commission. This image does not fit me at all, I am in for my passion and I can only do this from the heart."

### Testimonials

What better way to reinforce his words than sharing some of the amazing testimonials Aruba Living Today received from their clients. We made a selection for you because we lack space to publish them all.

#### J. 1987

"Randolph and his team helped us immensely to find our dream home on Aruba. Their service is excellent, before and after buying the house. His office also helped us with financing the property.

Finding the perfect home is the goal, but what I found just as important during the whole process is Randolph's integrity. He really looks at what you need, doesn't make false claims and also advises you correctly when it is not



in his own interest. This makes you feel valued and in good hands."

#### vanmullem1

"Without any doubt the best real estate agent on the island! Randolph helped out buying our property on the island, representing us as a buyer. The guy knows the island and most people in Aruba what is a great help. His after sales goes way beyond expected and included services like helping getting connected to water, electricity and gas. If needed he can help you find renters for your house and managing it, again with the same service and transparency. Summarizing, the guy and his company are our eyes and ears on the island if we are not there."

#### Debora Zywusko

"My husband and I have been

coming to Aruba for 30 years and have dreamed about owning our own home in Aruba. I was referred to Randolph from Aruba Living Today. I am a Realtor myself in the US for 38 years, so finding the right Realtor was the key. Randolph and his team has made this process a piece of cake. His integrity and honesty has made him a success, always available when we called or wanted to meet. Not only is he our Realtor, but a new lifelong friend!!! Be sure to call him."

#### Frank Stolp

"Aruba Living Today is probably the best real estate agent on the island. Randolph and his team arranged long term rental houses for us, communication with them is always correct and they respond quickly. Absolutely recommend Aruba Living Today!"

#### Linda Kandel

"THE BEST! No other way to describe the way I was treated at this company. ABOVE AND BEYOND any expected services. 5 star all the way! Don't hesitate."

#### The door is open

Aruba Living Today houses in an authentic Aruban house, welcoming you in a warm ambiance that emphasizes the philosophy of connecting. Candles, Buddha ornaments, magazines and a homey setting form the décor for you to sit and talk about your dream house or investment. Aruba Living Today caters for both local and foreign market divided into 40 % local buyers and 60 % foreign buyers. "Our customers come from Holland, Belgium, Norway, Germany, UK, Russia, Latin America, United States and Canada. We are widely covered and thus provable good with different cultures, also we speak four languages." Besides that Aruba Living Today is open to every budget, they have listings for all category buyers. As a member of the Aruban Real Estate Association they are listed also on the website [www.arubalisting.com](http://www.arubalisting.com) within a group of 20 of the most advanced realtors on the island. Aruba Living Today is featured as well on television and you can find them on House Hunters, Social Media - Aruba Living Today and of course in Aruba Today's newspaper. □

#### Aruba Living Today

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Cell +297 593 9177  
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# Surging natural gas prices: Threat to consumers this winter?

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ

AP Business Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Brace for a rude surprise on your winter heating bills.

After years of unusually inexpensive levels, the price of natural gas in the United States has more than doubled since this time last year. In Europe and Asia, wholesale prices are more than five times what they were a year ago.

The surging costs have coincided with a robust recovery from the pandemic recession, with more homes and businesses burning all forms of fuel. That intensified demand is poised to contribute to higher heating costs in many areas of the world.

Having enjoyed a prolonged period of low prices, consumers of natural gas are facing the burden of far more expensive fuel — and the prospect of much higher heating bills this winter.

"Consumers got used to very low prices last year, because with the pandemic everything was shut down," said Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association. "Now, everything's coming back online, industry is returning and natural gas is being used again in very large quantities. And that's pushing up the price."

In Europe and Asia, some companies that rely on natural gas have been forced out of business because of the higher prices. Four small British energy companies failed in recent weeks. Fertilizer producers, which use natural gas as a feedstock, are struggling. So are heavy industries that require significant heat, such as aluminum or cement producers. Power companies in Europe and Asia are engaged in bidding wars over shiploads of liquid natural gas, thereby driving up the cost. Prices are also spiking in the U.S., which converts some of its natural gas into liquid and ships it to Europe and Asia. Those higher costs are showing up in gas bills for consumers around the globe. Analysts expect



In this Aug. 26, 2021 file photo, a flare burns natural gas at an oil well Aug. 26, 2021, in Watford City, N.D.

Associated Press

those prices to rise further through winter, when customers are most reliant on the fuel.

The main reason natural gas prices have jumped is that demand for fuel has accelerated as economies have recovered from the damage caused by the pandemic. But there's another key factor too: There's simply less gas on the market.

The factors that have diminished the supply are varied. When the pandemic was raging, oil prices tumbled and producers ran low on money to drill. Once they curtailed drilling for oil, they also retrieved less gas, because most wells pump both oil and gas out of the ground at the same time.

What's more, Europe burned through significant natural gas last winter to heat homes during frigid weather, leaving storage tanks with little fuel. Then the summer was less windy than usual, so wind turbines didn't generate as much energy as expected. That, in turn, led nations to burn more natural gas, further depleting reserves.

At the same time, Russia reduced its natural gas supply to Europe, noted Carlos Torres Diaz, an analyst at Rystad Energy. All those factors combined to send

natural gas prices in Europe skyrocketing to roughly \$26 per million BTUs, compared with just \$4 at the same time last year.

A similar pattern occurred in China and Japan: Power plants burned more natural gas than usual to cool homes on a series of unusually hot days. Prices surged to \$29 per million BTU in Asia, Rystad Energy calculated, from \$5 a year ago. Ira Joseph, an analyst at S&P Global Platts, noted that demand for liquid natural gas has been robust, even at much higher prices. In Japan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Taiwan and Indonesia, prices are so high that power companies will likely burn oil instead, according to Rystad. For the earth's environment, that could become an alarming trend. Burning oil generates more climate-harming emissions than burning natural gas.

The wholesale price of natural gas in the U.S. has exceeded \$5, up sharply from \$2 to \$3 during most of the past two years. That's the highest price since 2014, though it's well below levels reached in the 2000s, when prices surpassed \$10 per million BTU. And drought-stricken places such as Brazil have been left with less hydropower and are

burning more natural gas instead, adding to global demand and leaving even less gas on the market.

For customers in the U.S., Europe and Asia, winter heating bills could be sharply higher. In the U.S., according to the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, natural gas bills could be as much as 30% more for consumers this winter, with the average cost to heat a home rising to \$750, from \$572 over the same months last winter.

Oil prices, too, have surged — to nearly \$80 a barrel in Europe and \$75 in the U.S. Just as with natural gas, a key reason is that producers sharply curtailed drilling during the pandemic. Another reason is that some power providers switch to burning oil for power generation if the price of natural gas goes too high, thereby increasing demand for oil and driving prices still higher. The cost to warm homes with heating oil or propane could surge 40%, according to NAEDA.

All of that could cause hardships for customers who were already struggling. The energy assistance association helped a record 1.2 million households pay their cooling bills over the summer — a level of aid up 46% from last year

and the most in the program's 40-year history. The increase was due in part to the higher temperatures that many experts have attributed to climate change. The need for assistance through the winter will likely grow for low-income families, with federal unemployment aid having recently run out.

"The ending of unemployment, for those families, puts them at greater risk for all expenses, not just energy bills," Wolfe said.

Natural gas producers in the U.S. might benefit from higher prices for gas sold in the United States or overseas. Yet there's a limit to how much they can export to Europe and Asia. Facilities along the U.S. Gulf Coast that export liquid natural gas, or LNG, are all shipping at capacity.

Some companies have wanted to expand those export facilities or build new ones. But because gas prices were so low over the past few years, these companies couldn't find enough buyers who wanted to sign long-term contracts. That could change, though, as buyers scramble for fuel.

"A lot of them might be rethinking their strategy and say, 'OK, maybe it's worth signing long-term contracts at a more certain price, rather than being a risk and try to get gas or LNG in this volatile market,'" Diaz said. Once those export facilities line up more long-term contracts, they could land the additional investment they need to complete the projects. □

## ARUBA CLEAN



## IS MORE DUSHI



## CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

**ACROSS** 39 Note from

1 Spice the boss

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nutmeg nest eggs

5 Forks over 41 Son of

9 Golf bag Zeus

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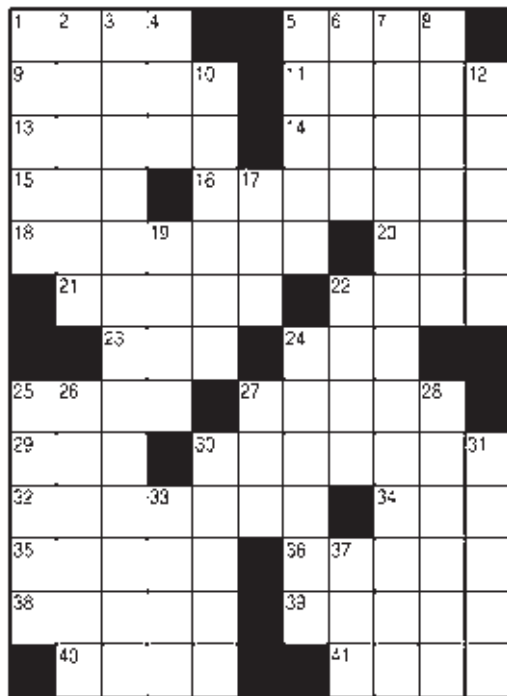
July orders

babies 31 Borders

22 Aerobics 33 Entreaty

feat 37 Backer's

24 Perches vote



10-1

AXYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

**10-1 CRYPTOQUOTE**

O C ' J G P J D C N F P T G

V S O Y E O V U G J I F G Y D N K ' S G

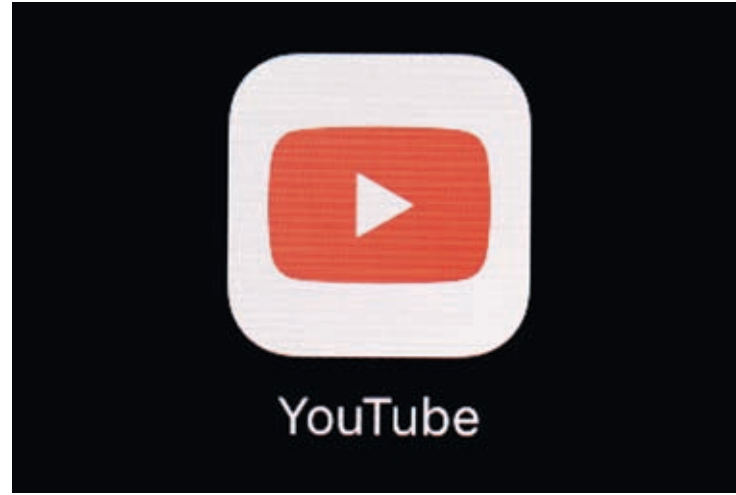
S O E F . C F G O Z V N S C P Y C C F O Y X

O J C N F P T G V S O Y E O V U G J I F G Y

D N K ' S G V N N S . — S P D P . R S N E

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I WOULD RATHER BE THE MAN WHO BOUGHT THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE THAN THE MAN WHO SOLD IT. — WILL ROGERS

## Fighting wave of misinfo, YouTube bans false vaccine claims



This March 20, 2018, file photo shows the YouTube app on an iPad in Baltimore.

Associated Press

By AMANDA SEITZ  
The Associated Press

YouTube announced a sweeping crackdown of vaccine misinformation Wednesday that booted popular anti-vaccine influencers from its site and deleted false claims that have been made about a range of immunizations.

The video-sharing platform said it will no longer allow users to baselessly speculate that approved vaccines, like the ones given to prevent the flu or measles, are dangerous or cause diseases.

YouTube's latest attempt to stem a tide of vaccine misinformation comes as countries around the globe struggle to convince a somewhat vaccine hesitant public to accept the free immunizations that scientists say will end the COVID-19 pandemic that began 20 months ago. The tech platform, which is owned by Google, already tried to ban COVID-19 vaccine misinformation last year, at the height of the pandemic.

"We've steadily seen false claims about the coronavirus vaccines spill over into misinformation about vaccines in general, and we're now at a point where it's more important than ever to expand the work we started with COVID-19 to other vaccines," YouTube said in a blog post.

Up until Wednesday, anti-vaccine influencers, who have thousands of subscribers, had used YouTube

to stoke fears around vaccines that health experts point out have been safely administered for decades. The YouTube channel of an organization run by environmental activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was one of several popular anti-vaccine accounts that was gone by Wednesday morning.

In an emailed statement to The Associated Press, Kennedy criticized the ban: "There is no instance in history when censorship and secrecy have advanced either democracy or public health."

YouTube declined to provide details on how many accounts were removed in the crackdown.

Under its new policy, YouTube says it will remove misinformation about any vaccine that has been approved by health authorities, such as the World Health Organization, and is currently being administered. False claims that those vaccines are dangerous or cause health issues, like cancer, infertility or autism theories that scientists have discredited for decades but have endured on the internet should also be removed.

"The concept that vaccines harm instead of help is at the foundation of a lot of misinformation," said Jeanine Guidry, a media and public health professor at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

She added that, if enforced properly, the new rules

could stop bad information from influencing a new parent who is using the internet to research whether or not to vaccinate their child, for example.

But, as is common when tech platforms announce stricter rules, loopholes remain for anti-vaccine misinformation to spread on YouTube.

Claims about vaccines that are being tested will still be allowed. Personal stories about reactions to the vaccine will also be permitted, as long as they do not come from an account that has a history of promoting vaccine misinformation.

Despite tech companies announcing a string of new rules around COVID-19 and vaccine misinformation during the pandemic, falsehoods have still found big audiences on the platforms. In March, Twitter began labelling content that made misleading claims about COVID-19 vaccines and said it would ban accounts that repeatedly share such posts. Facebook, which also owns Instagram, had already prohibited posts claiming COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility or contain tracking microchips, and in February announced it would similarly remove claims that vaccines are toxic or can cause health problems such as autism. □

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## Amazon unveils 'Jetsons'-like roaming robot for the home

By JOSEPH PISANI

AP Retail Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Amazon's new robot can hear, see and follow you around the the home, but its no Rosey the Robot.

Amazon's version, called Astro, doesn't cook or clean like the animated character from "The Jetsons," but it can check if you left the stove on while you're out or send an alert if someone enters the house it doesn't recognize.

It uses cameras, sensors and artificial technology to avoid walls or dogs, and Amazon said Astro which also happens to be the name of the Jetson's dog will only get smarter as time goes on. It does do some housework: Snacks or a can of soda can be placed on its back to be carted to someone across the house. The \$1,000 robot, which will be sent out to customers later this year, was one of a slew of gadgets Amazon

unveiled Tuesday as part of its annual event ahead of the holidays.

Astro, however, stole the show. Amazon executive David Limp asked the 17-inch (43-centimeter) tall robot to come on stage during the virtual event, then asked it to beatbox. Its round digital eyes close or widen as it does tasks, giving it a human-like touch.

Amazon said a limited number of the Astro will be sold, but didn't provide a number.

Besides the robot, Amazon also unveiled a picture frame-like screen that can be hung to a wall and has Amazon's Alexa voice assistant built in. The company foresees it going in the kitchen, where users can see recipes, check their schedule or watch a show as they cook. Also Tuesday, the Seattle-based company said its Echo listening devices will be put in Disney hotel rooms next year so



This photo provided by Amazon shows the company's new robot called Astro.

Associated Press

that guests can order towels from room service or ask it the fastest way to get to a theme park. □

## U.N. agency: Innovation continued even as coronavirus emerged

By JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

**GENEVA (AP)** — The U.N.'s intellectual property agency said Monday that innovation marched forward last year despite the impact of the coronavirus outbreak. Technology, pharmaceuticals and biotech industries boosted their investments, even as hard-hit sectors like transport and travel eased back on spending. The World Intellectual Property Organization, which helps coordinate and approve international patents, trademarks and other intellectual property, also warned that change in the overall

"innovation landscape" was happening too slowly, saying a broader array of countries should benefit from it as the world rebuilds after the pandemic ebbs. The findings released Monday emerged from WIPO's latest innovation index report for 2020, which ranked Switzerland, Sweden, the

United States, Britain, and fast-climber South Korea driven partly from creativity like K-Pop music as the most innovative economies.

China and France edged up in the rankings, which continue to be dominated by Asia, Europe and North America. □



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# More than a statue: Cooper explores the Vanderbilt legacy

By **DAVID BAUDER** AP Media Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — When Anderson Cooper was 6 years old, his father took him to see the statue of Cornelius "The Commodore" Vanderbilt near New York's Grand Central Terminal. The transportation magnate was America's richest man when he died in 1877, the 19th century equivalent of Jeff Bezos or Bill Gates.

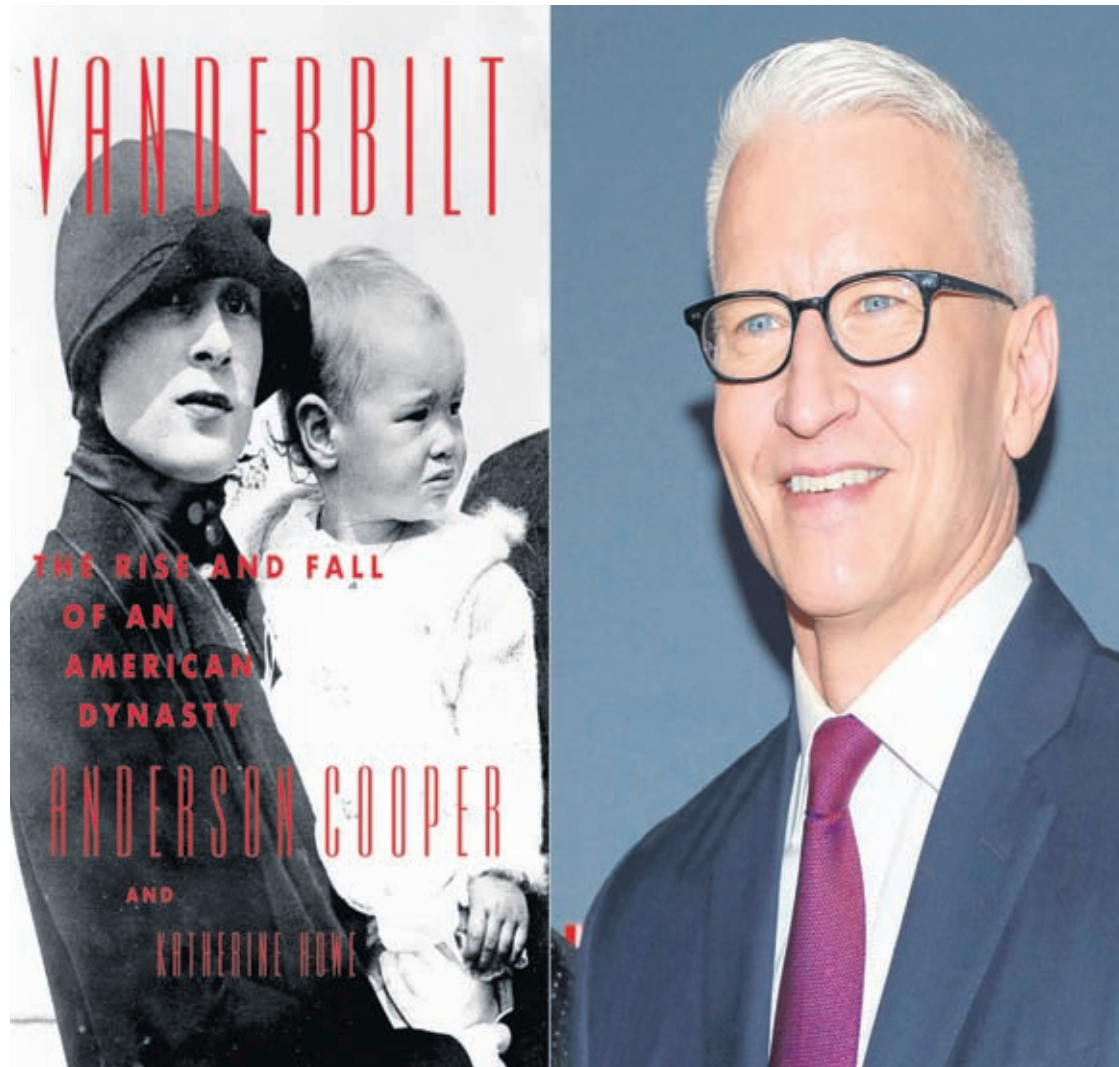
He was also Cooper's great-great-great grandfather. For much of his life, the CNN personality shunned his lineage. Now 54 and a father himself, Cooper has taken a second look and, with historian Katherine Howe, written the book "Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of an American Dynasty" that explores the family's complicated legacy.

The Commodore was obsessed with making money, and left behind \$100 million — real coin back in those days. Yet that obsession damaged those around him, and succeeding generations of Vanderbilts, fairly and unfairly, became symbols of the "idle rich" and frittered away a fortune.

"Certainly, when I started working in news, I didn't want to show up on stories and have people say, 'Oh, this guy is a Vanderbilt' or whatever," Cooper said. "I didn't think any good could come of it, personally or professionally. I really worked hard not to do anything that would associate me with that."

Researching the family "was like opening a door and discovering this whole history that I consciously avoided knowing about," he said.

It's startling to read Cooper describe taking on extra shifts at CNN to help pay for his mother's nurses when



This combination photo shows cover art for "Vanderbilt: The Rise and Fall of An American Dynasty," left, and co-author Anderson Cooper at the 13th annual CNN Heroes: An All-Star Tribute in New York on Dec. 8, 2019.

she recuperated from a fall. This was Gloria Vanderbilt, given the hated nickname "the poor little rich girl" during a sensational custody trial in 1934, who inherited \$4 million when she turned 21.

He tells about his mother, who died in 2019 at age 95, calling him once because she desperately needed two screens for her apartment made of valuable wallpaper — wallpaper she once had and sold. They cost \$50,000. Bored with the screens six months later, she asked if Cooper had room for them in his basement.

"No one," Cooper and Howe write, "can make money evaporate into thin air like a Vanderbilt."

His mom's inheritance was gone by the time he was born, but she had success on her own: Most Americans today associate Gloria Vanderbilt with the designer jeans line she launched in 1977. When she died, there wasn't much left in her estate beyond the apartment she owned, Cooper said.

"I sometimes think if she didn't have the Vanderbilt name, she would have been better off," he said. "People would have looked at her more like she really was" instead of what they assumed.

In the book, the authors zero in on a handful of Vanderbilts, from the Commodore's namesake son, who shot himself in the head at

age 51, to Gladys Vanderbilt, forced in 2018 to move out of the Newport, Rhode Island, mansion that her great-grandparents built in 1895. The journey of Alva Erskine Smith Vanderbilt, who divorced the Commodore's grandson Willie, is fascinating for what it says about the role of women a century ago. She burned to establish the Vanderbilts in a New York high society that shunned them, then turned her back on that by becoming an activist for women's suffrage. Her ex-husband's life revolved around parties, yachts and the horses. He said before he died: "My life was never destined to be quite happy ... Inherited wealth is a real handicap to happiness. It is as certain a death to ambition as cocaine is to morality."

Cooper takes a pass on the cocaine reference, but said he "absolutely" believes the sentiment about inherited wealth. Much of what the Vanderbilts left behind didn't survive, he

said.

"The things that they thought were monuments, which were the houses they built and spent a fortune on, were torn down in 60 years in many cases," he said. "They were just too bloated and impossible to keep up and times change. They couldn't be sold off to other rich people, because they didn't want them."

The book is short of details on Cornelius Vanderbilt's business success. Cooper figures there are other resources for that. He wanted to explore more of the personal side.

It wasn't pretty. The patriarch played favorites with his sons and largely ignored his daughters, figuring they would get married and not carry on the Vanderbilt name.

"I certainly would not have wanted to have grown up in his house," Cooper said. "But I admire that he did create new businesses — not just one empire but two empires. What he did was extraordinary, but it came at great cost to those around him."

He believes he and his mother inherited something of the Commodore's work ethic.

"I don't have the drive for money in that way," he said. "But I certainly understand the drive to make a name for yourself and try to create something in your chosen field, and do things that feel important."

After his mother's death, Cooper began to explore the journals, letters, documents and photos she left behind and, he wrote, "began to hear the voices of those people I never knew." When his own son was born in 2020, he wondered what he would tell him about the family, what lessons could be learned. He doesn't know whether he'll retrace with his own son the steps he took with his father to the statue long ago but, arguably, he's already done something more valuable with the book.

"I wanted him to have a sense of who they were as people," he said. "For better or worse." □



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# Quick hook: MLB's 200-inning club becomes even smaller

By **DAVID BRANDT**  
AP Sports Writer

Los Angeles Dodgers right-hander Walker Buehler has a lot of pride in reaching 200 innings pitched this season, especially considering he's battled injuries through parts of his career, including Tommy John surgery. Considering the current state of big-league pitching, it's even more impressive.

"I've never done it before and it's weird because it used to be the norm," Buehler said. "It's been a goal of mine for a long time. It's hard to put into words because you're doing it over 32, 33 starts."

It appears that just four pitchers will reach the 200-inning mark this season, including Buehler, Phillies right-hander Zack Wheeler, Cardinals right-hander Adam Wainwright and Marlins righty Sandy Alcantara. That would be the fewest in a full season in modern MLB history.

Buehler's durability has been a bonus for the Dodgers, who have won 102 games and are still in the hunt for another NL West title.

"It's great, certainly considering what we've been through with pitching," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "To really be able to bank six or six-plus (innings) every time he takes the mound is huge."

It wasn't long ago that 200 innings pitched in a sea-



Los Angeles Dodgers starting pitcher Walker Buehler throws to the plate during the first inning of a baseball game against the San Diego Padres Tuesday, Sept. 28, 2021, in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

son was a common occurrence in the big leagues — a sign of a solid, healthy season but nothing special. Just two years ago, 15 pitchers topped the mark. In 2011, there were 39, led by Justin Verlander's 251 innings. No one will get close to touching 250 this season. Wheeler could top 220 depending on how many innings he throws in his final start as the Phillies chase slim playoff hopes in the NL East.

There are myriad reasons the 200-inning starter is becoming so rare. Among them:

— The COVID-19 effect: The workload for starting

pitchers had been trending downward for years, but it really accelerated during the coronavirus-shortened 2020 season. When pitchers returned for the abbreviated summer camp, teams were ultra-cautious with their starters. It's an approach that's largely continued into 2021.

— Pitch counts. The concept of limiting a starter's pitches in an outing is far from new, but managers are sticking to lower limits, even for ace pitchers. In 2019, starters were allowed to throw at least 100 pitches 1,167 times. Two years later, that number might not even reach 700.

— Openers. Also not a new concept, but the idea of starting the game with a reliever or having "bullpen" games has become more commonplace throughout the league. The Tampa Bay Rays — who made the World Series in 2020 and could win 100 games this season — have been one of the biggest proponents of the trend. Their starting pitchers have thrown less than 80 pitches 84 times this season, which leads MLB.

— 26-man rosters. MLB has historically allowed 25 players on the active roster, but that number was bumped to 28 in the altered 2020 season. Starting in 2021, the

number was reduced to 26, but it still allowed many teams to carry another pitcher in the bullpen. The 31-year-old Wheeler has evolved into one of MLB's best pitchers, but even with his team locked in a playoff race, manager Joe Girardi has had a close eye on the right-hander's pitch counts. He's topped 100 pitches just once in his last six starts. "They're just looking out for me," Wheeler said. "I communicate with them between starts on how I feel. That's why we're doing what we're doing. I want to keep pitching for the rest of the season and hopefully into the playoffs."

Wainwright might be the most unlikely member of this year's club. The 40-year-old has been one of the game's top pitchers for a long time but this is his first 200-inning season since 2014. He led the National League with 241 2/3 innings pitched in 2013.

The 26-year-old Alcantara is the most anonymous of the bunch, quietly leading the Marlins pitching staff. Miami manager Don Mattingly said pitchers still relish taking the mound every fifth day and going deep into games.

"When he's out there, he's thinking nine (innings) all the time," Mattingly said. "He doesn't like coming out of games. It's just a continuation of his growth. It's a mark for guys just being out there for your club." □

## Frank Thomas heads group that buys Field of Dreams site

**DYERSVILLE, Iowa (AP)** — Frank Thomas has found his Field of Dreams.

The Hall of Famer has headed a venture that bought controlling interest in Go the Distance Baseball's stake of All-Star Ballpark Heaven and the Field of Dreams Movie Site.

The company said Thursday that This is Heaven LLC, a company of the 53-year-old Thomas and Chicago real estate developer Rick Heidner, bought

the interests in Go the Distance Baseball owned by the Denise M. Stillman Trust. Thomas will be chief executive officer and former Chicago White Sox general manager Dan Evans will be chief operating officer. Stillman headed a group that bought the field, the location of the 1989 movie "Field of Dreams," and the adjacent Lansing family farm in 2011. The site of about 190 acres includes a working cornfield. She died

in 2018.

Major League Baseball built a ballpark adjacent to the movie site, and the New York Yankees and Chicago White Sox played the first big league game there on Aug. 12. The Chicago Cubs and Cincinnati Reds are scheduled to play there next Aug. 11.

Thomas, a five-time All-Star and two-time AL MVP nicknamed the Big Hurt, was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2014. □



Former Chicago White Sox player and Hall of Famer Frank Thomas holds the 2005 World Series Champion trophy before a baseball game between the Kansas City Royals and the Chicago White Sox in Chicago, in this Saturday, July 18, 2015, file photo.

Associated Press



# Celebrate Brady but remember he's not perfect



Tampa Bay Buccaneers quarterback Tom Brady (12) is interviewed on the field after the NFL Super Bowl 55 football game against the Kansas City Chiefs, in Tampa, Fla., in this Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021, file photo.

Associated Press

**By TIM DAHLBERG**  
AP Sports Columnist

Tom Brady's return to New England will surely be a massive lovefest, at least up until the moment he lines up under center Sunday night for Tampa Bay. With good reason, because there's a lot to celebrate for the greatest quarterback of his time and the legacy he somehow keeps writing at the age of 44.

Everyone knows about the six Super Bowl rings for the Patriots and the late-game comebacks so numerous they're hard to count. Brady also won 219 regular-season games for New England and was 30-10 overall in the playoffs, with 73 touchdown passes.

Along the way, he and coach Bill Belichick transformed the Patriots into

a juggernaut the likes of which the NFL has never seen. Brady's numbers are so impressive that he'll be a first ballot Hall of Famer, assuming, of course, he ever decides to retire. But while he gets well-deserved accolades for 20 seasons of spectacular work in New England, let's not forget some other numbers.

At least five footballs softened by taking some air out of them in the 2015 AFC championship game against Indianapolis. A four-game suspension for Brady for his part in deflating them, and a \$1 million fine and loss of two draft picks for the Patriots.

No, it probably won't get mentioned on the NBC telecast because it doesn't fit the narrative. Sunday's game is a moment to cel-

brate a remarkable run with one team and one coach, not to dwell on the mistakes made along the way.

Like it or not, though, Deflategate is part of Brady's legacy. It always will be, even though he steadfastly denies the allegations that led to his suspension.

It may not matter to New England fans, who for the most part believe their quarterback was unjustly punished to begin with. But it needs to be remembered, just like all the winning last minute drives and the Super Bowl wins.

The NFL said Brady cheated. Period.

The league suspended Brady after a 243-page report from investigator Ted Wells said two former equipment managers were

involved in letting air out of the balls and that Brady "was at least generally aware" of the scheme.

In upholding the suspension, commissioner Roger Goodell noted that Brady destroyed his cell phone right about the time he met with Wells to answer questions about the deflated footballs. Goodell said Brady did so "even though he was aware that the investigators had requested access to text messages and other electronic information that had been stored on that phone."

No, there was no smoking gun linking Brady to the deflation.

He wasn't caught with a needle and a bag of footballs behind the grandstands that day in Foxborough.

But there was enough circumstantial evidence for the NFL to come down — and come down hard — on the parties involved. Footballs don't just suddenly deflate, especially when those in possession of the opposing team kept all their air.

Brady and the Patriots would go on to trounce the Colts in the game, leading 17-7 at half before the deflation was discovered, and winning 45-7. A few weeks later, Brady and Belichick celebrated as they won their fourth Super Bowl together, this one over Seattle.

Two years later, they would win the Super Bowl again, after Brady missed the first quarter of the season while serving his suspension. New England owner Robert Kraft thumbed his nose at Goodell, calling the win "unequivocally the sweetest" of all the team's championship wins.

No single incident should define Brady's career, of course, and Deflategate barely registers anymore when it comes to evaluating his incredible success. Winning six Super Bowls in New England and adding another in Tampa Bay while playing well into his 40s is what Brady will be remembered for, and he's done things no other quarterback can even hope to achieve.

Indeed, the most puzzling thing about Brady being involved in deflating game balls is that he seemed to feel he needed help to win. He didn't, and if anyone thinks otherwise all they have to do is take a peek at the three Super Bowl rings he's won since that year.

So celebrate him on Sunday in his return to Foxborough because you'll never see any quarterback win seven Super Bowls again. Celebrate him on Sunday because, if he ever does retire, he'll do so holding many other records that no other quarterback can even hope to match.

Just remember that even the greats aren't necessarily perfect. □